

Welcome to the Homeless Liaison list. This listserv is a communication between the SD-DOE State Homeless Coordinator and the school districts' liaisons. Periodically, you will be receiving a short newsletter pertaining to the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness. If you have questions or comments, please direct them to [Laura.Johnson-Frame@state.sd.us](mailto:Laura.Johnson-Frame@state.sd.us). Where it is appropriate, your questions and comments will be shared with all liaisons across South Dakota.

*Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program  
Title VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act  
Amended by NCLB Act of 2001*

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**Immunizations and School Enrollment**

Many districts across the nation grapple with state laws pertaining to required immunization and the enrollment of homeless children. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001 states that **students who are homeless must be immediately enrolled in school and allowed to attend school even though they may not have the necessary immunizations required for enrollment.** This federal law supersedes any state laws. Yet in some states changes have not occurred in state laws, rules making, and/or policies to bring them into compliance with the federal law; thus, the confusion in the school districts.

A quick consultation with Michelle Hudecek, RN -- Immunization Program Coordinator for the South Dakota Department of Health -- provided the answer I needed on this issue in South Dakota. Here is Ms. Hudecek's answer. "On the back of the Certificate of Immunization that is filled out for all children entering a SD school for the first time, there is a section called "Instructions to School Administrator". This section informs the school that children transferring in (at any grade level), who have not met requirements, must be informed of the necessary requirements and then be given 45 days to show compliance.

If the child is homeless and has no insurance, he or she can go to any provider utilizing state-supplied vaccine and receive the vaccinations free of charge. Providers are allowed to charge a small administration fee, but if the client is unable to pay, then providers are asked to waive the fee."

**Your district must enroll and admit to the classroom a homeless child whether or not there is proof of immunization. Your role as the Homeless Education Coordinator, in the best interest of the child, is to work with the parent to get the proof of immunization or begin the process of immunization. According to Hudecek, "there are minimum intervals of time that must occur between immunizations, so if the student can show the school that they are in progress; then the child should not be excluded."**

In addition, according to SDCL 13-28-7.1, as an alternative to the requirement for a physician's certification, the pupil may present:

- (1) Certification from a licensed physician stating the physical condition of the child would be such that a test or immunization would endanger the child's life or health; or
- (2) A written statement signed by one parent or guardian that the child is an adherent to a religious doctrine whose teachings are opposed to such test and immunization.

For more information on the state immunization program and required immunizations, visit <http://www.state.sd.us/doh/Immunize/school.htm>

Ms. Hudecek's contact information is: South Dakota Department of Health, 615 East 4th Street, Pierre, SD 57501, Phone (605) 773-5323 and Fax (605) 773-5942 or [Michelle.Hudecek@state.sd.us](mailto:Michelle.Hudecek@state.sd.us) You may contact her directly or through this newsletter by emailing [Laura.Johnson-Frame@state.sd.us](mailto:Laura.Johnson-Frame@state.sd.us), if you wish to share your questions.

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The South Dakota Department of Education, Office of Education of Homeless Children and Youth hosts the South Dakota Local Educational Agency Homeless Liaison Listserv. The purpose of the listserv is to foster communication among educators, advocates, and the SD Department of Education to ensure homeless children and youth have access, enrollment, and transportation to a quality, mainstream education within the guidelines of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act of 2001.

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